
The MCA Advisory

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Dues: \$20.00/year

MCA Meeting 1/15/2005

The Club convened, some 30 strong, at our meeting at the New York International. After a round of introductions, members made suggestions about expanding the MCA Advisory. Several attendees volunteered articles which, when they are forthcoming, will greatly enrich our pages. Vice President John Kraljevich agreed to update the auction sale calendar: there will be heavy activity in London this October as the nation celebrates the bicentennial of Trafalgar. John Ford's Betts medals are now scheduled for June 2006.

Following the business portion of the meeting, ye editor spoke on Thomas Jefferson and his involvement with historical medals. TJ's involvement was far greater than that of any other Founding Father. A more complete summary of the speech will be contained in the February issue.

We need a good speaker and/or a roundtable for our August meeting in San Francisco. Any volunteers?

What's New On Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

www.medalcollectors.org

From the Editor

We had some issues in 2004 but this, our first issue in 2005, is a bell ringer. As many of you know David Menchell won best of breed and best of show for his exhibit at the ANA Convention. Included herein is Part I of three parts depicting the medals of the French and Indian Wars. Great stuff!

A complete change of pace is the article by Lev Tsitrin on electrotyping. Read it and then re-read it. Comments go right to the heart of why we collect medals and why the lowly electrotype is worthy of your strict attention. Our hope is that Lev will follow this philosophical piece with an article on what can be collected in this field—Ready's, Peale's, Pistrucci's and the like.

Dues are Due

Enclosed with the present issue is your 2005 dues notice. For some it is a nuisance to be sending out \$20 checks every year so, if you prefer, send us \$35 for two years or \$50 for three.

We're happy to have your money but we want even more to have your interest. The content of the MCA Advisory has been pretty darn good. However, readership participation could bear improvement.. So send along your news, your questions, etc.

MEDALS OF CONFLICT, MEDALS OF CONQUEST:

THE NUMISMATIC LEGACY OF THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

(by) David Menchell

(The following text and images are derived from my exhibit of French and Indian War medals displayed at the ANA Convention in Pittsburgh this past summer. In the exhibit, each topic or event discussed was illustrated by examples of related medals, often shown in multiple compositions. Due to space considerations, the various compositions are mentioned in the text, although only a single example is shown to represent each medal.)

The French and Indian War:

An Introduction

The French and Indian War is the name commonly given to the period of armed conflict in North America from 1754 until 1763. During the 17th and 18th centuries, increasing competition between the French settlers of New France and the British colonists of the thirteen Atlantic colonies and Nova Scotia led to a series of frontier skirmishes and escalating military involvement, often with the support of Indian allies. At stake was control of the rich river valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi, the valuable fisheries off the Atlantic coast of Newfoundland, and the profitable fur trade.

As the armed struggle escalated in America after 1753, eventually spreading to Europe (referred to as the Seven

Years' War), a number of commemorative medals were struck to celebrate the various American victories and conquests. The French were successful in the early campaigns, having troops better trained in the art of warfare in the difficult forest terrain of North America, but the British troops quickly adapted to these conditions. With improvement in military strategy and superior numbers, the tide of war soon turned in favor of the English. This is reflected in the vastly greater number of British victory medals issued. The variety of medals produced run the gamut from the crude brass issues celebrating Admiral Boscawen's involvement in the fall of Louisbourg to the elaborate victory medals produced under the supervision of the Society for Promoting Arts and Commerce, recalling the classical images of earlier Greek and Roman coinage. Also of interest are medals issued to commemorate the 1756 destruction of the Indian village of Kittanning near modern-day Pittsburgh and those given to Indian participants prior to the signing the Treaty of Easton in 1757. These were the first medals to be designed and struck in North America.

In this discussion, I summarize the key events of the war and show many of the contemporaneous medals issued to memorialize these events. Included are a number of rare items, including silver examples of the Louisbourg, Wolfe, and other victory medals, early restrikes of the Treaty of Easton medal in silver and white metal, a unique engraved edge Guadeloupe medal, and two previously undescribed medals, the Louisbourg and Wolfe medals in gilt copper. Also

included are two rare and unusual die-struck tobacco boxes commemorating the British bombardment of Martinique and the peace negotiations of 1762. While rarity is difficult to determine in this series, estimates are made based on appearances at auction and known examples in museum collections, with rare examples probably numbering 30-75 (R-5), very rare 12-30 (R-6), and extremely rare less than 12 examples known (R-7).



A map of North America, showing the approximate boundary between British and French territories in the northeast, major colonial cities, and fortifications, ca. 1755.

Franco-American Jetons

The Franco-American jetons of 1751 to 1758 form an interesting grouping of medalets relating to French Colonial history in America. Struck in silver and copper, these jetons were probably given as gifts by companies involved in commerce in the French Colonies, and may have served to

advertise the riches of the New World to potential settlers. There are several obverse dies depicting Louis XV, with different reverses for each year in the series. The reverse vignettes typically suggest the rich bounty of New France, showing crops and animals or pelts associated with the fur trade, as Betts 389 and 390 above. Betts 393 alludes to the emigration of French citizens to America. They are frequently found with extensive wear, indicating that they probably circulated to supplement the inadequate supply of colonial coinage. The dies were reused over the years to produce a number of restrikes, usually distinguished by thicker planchets, unusual mulings, and edge markings. The original strikings shown are decidedly rarer.



Franco-American Jeton, 1754

Betts 389

Francois Marteau, and Charles Roettier, engravers.

Original strikings in silver and copper; rare.

Shown in silver - 28.8 mm, 90.2 grains

Obverse: **LUD. XV. REX CHRISTIANISS.** (Louis XV, Most Christian King). Laureated bust of Louis XV in armor to the right. **F.M.** under truncation.

Reverse: **NON INFERIORA METALLIS** (Not inferior to [precious] metals). In exergue: **COL. FRANC. DE | L'AM 1754** (French Colonies in America 1754). Three beavers at work on the left of a stream; Indian corn growing to the right; **C. N. R.** below.



Franco-American Jeton, 1755

Betts 390

Francois Marteau, Engraver
Original strikings in copper and silver; silver - extremely rare.
Shown in silver - 28.4 mm, 93.7 grains

Obverse: **LUD. XV. REX CHRISTIANISS.** (Louis XV, Most Christian King) Bust of Louis XV in lion's skin to the right; hair tied with a bow. *f* | *m* under truncation.

Reverse: **NON VILIUS AUREO** (Not less valuable than the golden [fleece]). In exergue: **COL. FRANC. DE | L'AM 1755** (French Colonies in America 1754). Ancient galley with beaver pelt suspended from mast



Franco-American Jeton, 1756

Betts 393
Francois Marteau, Engraver
Original strikings in copper and silver; very rare.
Shown in silver - 28.5 mm, 93.6 grains.

Obverse: **LUD. XV. REX CHRISTIANISS.** Under the decollation, *m* (for Marteau.)
Laureated naked head to right.
(Variety shown with clothed bust right, no initial below bust)

Reverse: **SEDEM NON ANIMUM MUTANT.** (They change their home but not their hearts). In exergue, **COL. FRANC. DE | L'AM. 1756.** Two bee-hives, with the ocean between them, and a swarm of bees flying from one to the other.

The State of Affairs between England and France

Produced by German engraver Peter Paul Werner, this medal reflects the concerns of the rest of the European community regarding the precarious state of affairs between England and France. The obverse figure of Mercury between French and English warships suggests that a state of war between the two countries may serve to disrupt commerce. Likewise, the reverse depiction of the seated female figure of Britannia threatened by a standing Indian, representing the American colonies of France, holding a bow and arrow with an alligator at his feet, alludes to the unsettled situation in America.

PW. (The condition of affairs at the close of the year 1755. The conclusion of the exergue being on the reverse). Mercury stands facing, upon the shore, and listening, his right hand at his ear - behind him two frigates bearing upon their ensigns respectively the harp of Ireland and the lilies of France.

Reverse: **SED MOTOS PRAESTAT COMPOSERE FLVCTVS.** (But he has power to soothe the troubled waves). In exergue, **SVB EXITVM ANNI | MDCCLV.** An Indian warrior stands at the left, with crown and girdle of feathers, and bearing in his left hand a bow and in his right an arrow, his right foot upon an alligator; at the right a female is seated upon a sea-horse, beside the ocean, bearing in her right hand a Temple of Fame and in her left a scepter; at her feet a cornucopia.

The Early Engagements: 1754-1756

While there was no formal declaration of war until 1756, disputed claims in the Ohio River valley and Acadia would result in several military campaigns beginning in 1754. Earlier the French, fearing British encroachment in these territories, built a string of forts from Nova Scotia to the western frontier in what is now western Pennsylvania. In the fall of 1753, Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia dispatched a 21-year-old militia officer, Major George Washington, in an unsuccessful attempt



The Condition of Affairs, 1755

Betts 392
Peter Paul Werner, Engraver
Struck in silver; rare
35.5 mm, 224.8 grains

Obverse: **SALVS IN FLVCTIBVS.** (Safety at sea) In exergue, **STATVS RERV | P**

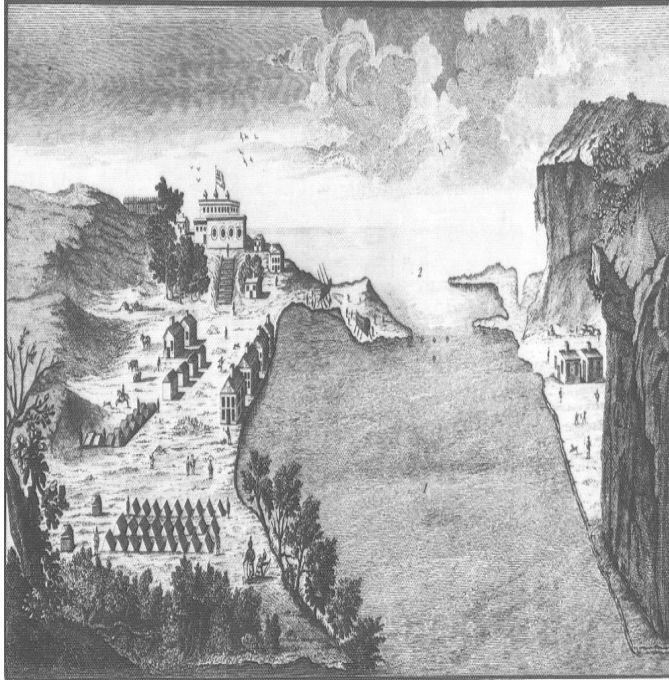
to negotiate a withdrawal of the French garrison at Fort Le Boeuf near Lake Erie. The following year, the French captured newly constructed Fort Prince George, a British outpost at the confluence of the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers, and renamed it Fort Duquesne.

The early campaigns on the western frontier proved disastrous for the English. On July 9th, 1755, a force of 2,500 redcoats and provincials under General Braddock sent to recapture Fort Duquesne was routed, and Braddock was killed. In September, troops commanded by Colonel William Johnson came under attack at their base on Lake George north of Albany by a combined force of 1,600 French and Indians. The attack was eventually repulsed, but a planned attack by the British against the French Fort Carillon being built on Lake Champlain had to be abandoned. The only significant English success of 1755 was the expedition against the French Fort Beausejour in Nova Scotia by a group of 2,000 Massachusetts provincials and 280 regulars under Lieutenant Colonel Monckton.

The British campaigns of 1756 saw only two minor victories. A supply column of 400 Americans under Captain Bradstreet was able to successfully defend themselves against a combined force of French and Indians near Fort Oswego. This victory was short-lived, however. Oswego subsequently fell to French forces under the recently arrived Marquis de Montcalm. Deploying troops from Fort Carillon, Montcalm attacked the three forts at Oswego. After two days of heavy bombardment, Fort

Ontario surrendered on August 13th, with Forts Pepperell and George falling the next day. Montcalm destroyed everything of value in the area, after which he redeployed his troops to Forts Niagara, Frontenac, and Carillon. The campaign at Oswego was the only Franco-American victory of the Seven Years War mentioned on a French medal, struck in 1758.

On September 8th, Colonel John Armstrong's Pennsylvania militia burned the Delaware Indian village of Kittanning, located about 40 miles north of Fort Pitt, in reprisal for the destruction of Fort Granville by Delaware and French raiding parties. As a result of Armstrong's attack, about 50 Indians were killed including their leader, Captain Jacobs, and 11 white prisoners were rescued out of an estimated 100 prisoners. A peaceful settlement of the war between the English and several eastern tribes, including the Delaware, was reached with the Treaty of Easton following the Easton Conference of 1758. With the abandonment of prior French alliances by the Indians of the Ohio Valley, the English were able to expand commercial and military control in the area. Both Armstrong's military action and the ensuing peace efforts were honored with medals produced in Philadelphia, the first such medals made in America.



Engraving of the south view of Oswego on Lake Ontario, showing the harbor and Fort George on the left bank of the Oswego River, 1755

French Victories, 1757

Unlike the earlier Franco-American jetons promoting the riches of the American colonies, the imagery on this medal alludes to French military triumphs and the state of war which prevailed by 1757. The French army is represented by the figure of Mars preparing to throw a spear and holding the shield of France, with the navy being symbolized by Neptune holding his trident. By 1758, the French would be on the defensive, with the British making major advances toward their objective of gaining total control of North America. As a result, no further jetons were struck after 1758.



Franco-American Jeton, 1757

Betts 393

Francois Marteau, Engraver
Original striking in copper and silver; very rare.

Shown in silver - 28.6 mm, 93.6 grains (Reverse)

Obverse: **LUD. XV. REX CHRISTIANISS.** Clothed bust right, no initial below bust)

Reverse: **PARAT ULTIMA TERRA TRIUMPHOS.** (The remotest land prepares triumphs). In exergue, **COL. FRANC. DE | L'AM. 1757.** Mars with uplifted spear and the shield of France, and Neptune with trident in his hands, floating on a shell, both figures to left.

French Victories, 1758

This is one of the few French medals struck to celebrate victories during the period of the French and Indian War. To support the stated claim of Louis XV as "Emperor of the World", earlier French conquests in Europe, Asia, and Oswego in America are listed. Ironically, by the time this medal was issued in 1758, French fortunes had

turned and French interests overseas were in decline. This medal probably served to counter the wave of English propaganda generated by recent British successes.



Oswego Captured, 1758

Betts 415

Struck in silver; rare 31.5 mm, 175.4 grains

Obverse: LUDOVICUS XV ORBIS IMPERATOR (Louis XV, Emperor of the World.) Under the head, **1758**. Laureated head of the King to right without drapery; hair tied with ribbon.

Reverse: WESEL OSWEGO PORTMAHON In exergue, **ESPUG. S^{TI} DAVIDIS | ARCE ET SOLO | ÆQUATA**. (The fort of St. David's taken by storm, and leveled to the ground). Four forts flying the French flag; reeded edge.

Colonel Armstrong and the Kittanning Medal

Following the destruction of Kittanning by Colonel Armstrong of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, the Council of the City of Philadelphia proposed some public display of appreciation for Armstrong and his officers. Edward Duffield, a watchmaker at Philadelphia, was appointed by the Council and engraved the dies for this medal. They were struck by silversmith Joseph Richardson, Sr., thus becoming the first medal to be engraved and struck in America. A letter of thanks dated January 5, 1757 from Philadelphia Mayor Atwood Shute to Armstrong accompanied a silver specimen of this medal along with a gift of money. It also makes mention of silver medals being awarded to each of the commissioned officers in the engagement, probably a total of 20 being produced. The dies continued to be used for producing restrikes and were eventually brought to the Mint in Philadelphia by Joseph Richardson, Jr. about 1800, where they were used until 1874, when die failure rendered them unusable.



Originals struck in silver (an estimated 20 struck), and restruck in copper and pewter. Copy dies made by U.S. Mint after 1880. Shown in copper, restrike from original dies – 45.8 mm, 926.9 grains

Obverse: THE GIFT OF THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA. A shield divided into quarters: 1, azure, on a fess argent two clasped right hands; 2, vert, a sheave of grain; 3, argent, a pair of scales in equipoise, proper; 4, azure, a ship sailing to left. These are believed to be the arms formerly used by the City of Philadelphia.

Reverse: KITTANNING DESTROYED BY COL. ARMSTRONG. In exergue, **SEPTEMBER. 8. | J756.** Log cabin village in flames; to the right a river; in the foreground an officer accompanied by two men points to a soldier firing under cover of a tree; an Indian falling on the bank of the river at the right.

The Quaker Medal and the Treaty of Easton

This is thought to be the first Indian Peace medal executed in America, and were presented by the “Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Means”, an organization of Quakers and other Christian groups seeking peaceful relations with their Indian neighbors. These medals were given by the Quakers at the Treaty of Easton in 1757, even as



Kittanning Destroyed, 1756

Betts 400, Julian MI-33
Edward Duffield, Engraver

representatives of the Crown were awarding the official George II design. The dies were executed by Edward Duffield, who also produced the Kittanning dies, and the medals were struck in silver by Joseph Richardson, Sr. Like the Kittanning medal, the dies were used to produce restrikes and were eventually deposited at the Philadelphia Mint. They continued to be used until 1875, when worsening die breaks led to their replacement by copy dies in 1882.



**George II Indian Peace Medal-
Treaty of Easton, 1757**

Betts 401, Julian IP-49.
Edward Duffield, Engraver.
Originals struck in silver are
extremely rare. Early restrikes in
silver and pewter. Later copper

restrike with broken obverse die.
U.S. Mint copy dies after 1880.
Shown in silver, early restrike
from original dies—45.4 mm, 660.7
grains

**Obverse: GEORGIUS • II • DEI
• GRATIA** (George II, by the
Grace of God). Draped and
laureated bust of the King in
armor to left.

**Reverse: LET US LOOK TO THE
MOST HIGH WHO BLESSED
OUR FATHERS WITH PEACE.**

In exergue, **J757**. A man seated
beneath a tree at the right offering
a pipe of peace to an Indian before
him, also seated on the ground ;
between them a Council fire ; the
sun above at the left.

**END OF FIRST
INSTALLMENT.**

War of 1812

(by David T. Alexander)

*[The following article by David
Alexander should be of interest to all
members who collect mint medals (and
all members who love history). Our
founder is a very precocious individual
indeed.]*

In the past three decades, interest
in U.S. medals has grown significantly,
in large measure through publication of
R.W. Julian's *Medals of the United States
Mint, the First Century* (Token & Medal
Society, 1977). This movement has been
assisted by the Russell Rulau-George
Fuld revision of William S. Baker's
Medallic Portraits of Washington in

opening fascinating areas to today's
forward-looking collectors.

One area immediately affected by
the Julian catalogue was the U.S. Mint's
Military and Naval series of the War of
1812, a conflict about which most
Americans are startlingly ignorant. Once
referred to as "the Second War of
Independence," the war of 1812-1815
took place during the Administration of
President James Madison, one of the
least understood Chief Executives of the
"Virginia Dynasty."

A man of great brilliance and
diminutive stature, "Jemmy" Madison
and his spouse Dolley may have looked
forward to a tranquil term of office after
his Inauguration in March 1809, but
world events came crashing through the
nation's doors, resulting in strained
relations with Napoleonic France and
outright war with Great Britain.

George Washington, John Adams,
and Thomas Jefferson had all tried to
safeguard the new Republic in a world
dominated by the Franco-British wars
that began with the French Revolution
and would end only with the final defeat
of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815. The
French Emperor's attempts at barring
British commerce from the European
mainland and British interference with
neutral trade, including American
shipping, led to numerous incidents.

Impressment of American seamen
into the British Royal Navy was an
ongoing irritant, Royal Navy attacks on
American ships brought popular opinion
to a boiling point. Mercantile New
England found her far-reaching trade

virtually ruined by the Jefferson's Embargo Act of December 1807 and Madison's Non-Intercourse Act of May 1809. New England began making noises of discontent with her declining fortunes in a Union dominated by Southern interests.

In 1810-1811 an American war party arose under the leadership of younger men of the West such as Henry Clay. They were convinced that Western Indian leaders such as the brilliant organizer Tecumseh were being incited against the expanding U.S. by the British regime in Canada. They openly advocated war with Britain and the outright conquest of Canada to bring peace to the Western frontier.

The Federal government's patience was exhausted by the Spring of 1812. Resolved to settle the matter once and for all, a 90-day embargo was enacted in April 1812, to ensure that American ships could seek safety in U.S. ports before the declaration of war on Britain on June 18. The declaration cited impressments, violations of the three-mile maritime territorial limit, the blockade and various hostile Orders in Council for the state of war.

Fighting took place in four principal areas: the struggle at sea, on land in the Old Northwest-Canada region, on land in the Washington-Baltimore and the abortive New Orleans invasion. Hungarian-born engraver Moritz Furst chronicled American success at sea in 18 naval medals. This prolific medalist also produced 11 medals of military victories, many in the Canadian sector.

Impressive as these 65-millimeter medals are, they provide a one-sided view of a decidedly mixed struggle. The invasion of Canada was in fact an inglorious failure while the British incursion against Washington, D.C. resulted in the rout of the minute U.S. Army and local militia and the shameful flight of the Federal government.

The indomitable Dolley Madison may have saved the portraits in the Executive Mansion but Rear Admiral Sir George Cockburn's cry; "Shall we burn this citadel of Yankee democracy?" was soon heard in the city, followed by the burning of the Capitol and White House.

The British government later cited the American burning of the Houses of Parliament at York (now in Ontario) as justification for the destruction of Washington. In any event Congress' refusal to pass legislation to equip the minuscule U.S. Army while declaring war was at least as much of a disaster for American hopes as the later burning.

Most modern historians agree that Madison was simply unfitted to be a war leader. The country was seriously divided about the desirability of the war, as the Hartford Convention of the New England states was to demonstrate. Although perhaps not bent on secession from the Union as sometimes charged, the Hartford gathering signaled New England's disenchantment with a national leadership that was oblivious to their region's very real sufferings.

Signing the Treaty of Ghent on Dec. 24, 1814 ended the War of 1812,

without resolving any of the stated causes of the conflict. Less than a month later, invading British forces were defeated at New Orleans on Jan. 8, 1815. This legendary battle was fought thanks to slow trans-oceanic communications of the age of sail but enabled the Americans to conclude the conflict on a triumphant note.

Electrotypes – without apology

(by Lev Tsitrin)

In the mixture of the fact and the gossip that fills the pages of Giorgio Vasari's *Lives*, no story is more amusing than that of young Michelangelo capitalizing on the rage for antiquities among the humanistic higher class of his time. Ancient Roman marbles were constantly being dug up in Rome and sold on the flourishing antiquities market to the sophisticated clientele of aristocrats and churchmen. So when Michelangelo showed his brand-new marble statue of the sleeping Cupid to a few friends, one of them had mischievously suggested that Michelangelo bury it in the earth for a while, so it would start to look old, and then sell it in Rome as an antique. This way, Baldassare del Milanese had assured Michelangelo, he would get more money for it. It made perfect sense – an ancient Roman sculpture was certain to fetch a much higher price than a just-finished Florentine one.

The plan worked like a charm. Struck by the beauty of the antique Cupid offered by Milanese, cardinal San Giorgio was only too happy to part with 200 crowns to acquire it. But some people in the know found it hard to keep their

mouths shut – and the cardinal got a wind of how he was swindled. Indignant, he sent the Cupid back to Milanese, and demanded – and got – the full refund.

To our modern sensibilities, this is a typical forger-discovered story, like many that fill the annals of the history of collecting. But not so to Vasari. He took a strikingly different, or rather, opposite, attitude. He was indeed indignant – yet not at the perpetrators of the hoax, but, surprisingly, at its victim. The Cardinal's sin, per Vasari? A failure to recognize a good piece of work while focusing on an extraneous, so far as aesthetics was concerned, fact of the Cupid's modern origin. And apparently, at that time Vasari's was the prevailing attitude. "San Giorgio incurred no small ridicule and even censure in the matter" – Vasari tells us – "he not having been able to appreciate the merit of the work; for this consisted in its absolute perfection, wherein, if a modern work be equal to the ancient, wherefore not value it as highly? For is it not a mere vanity to think more of the name than the fact?"

Vasari's contemporaries did not often follow in the footsteps of cardinal San Giorgio, and numismatics is perhaps a prime example of their attitude. Roman coins were highly prized for their aesthetic as well as ideological value as witnesses to civic virtue of the ancient Rome, and to its decay and dissolution when that virtue was abandoned, Roman coins helped to instill virtuous thinking into those viewing them. And to contemplate Roman coinage was not only a moral gain, but also a pleasure: the coins were beautiful works of art.

Now, some coins were scarce, and many high-minded humanists were unable to assemble a complete series. Not to worry. The pieces made by Giovanni del Cavino, Michelangelo's younger contemporary, helped to fill the gaps. They were just as good as the original Roman bronzes for the purposes of teaching civic virtue – and just as beautiful as their originals. In a strictly aesthetic sense, they were just as original as the originals – if one bothered to take into consideration the fact that most die-cutters of the ancient Rome and its provinces never worked from life anyway, but rather copied the copies of the copies of an original design. In that sense, Cavino was just one of them – fifteen centuries removed.

But of course, the purpose of numismatics drastically changed since the time of Michelangelo, Vasari and Cavino. We now see coinage as primarily a witness to economic activity of ancient times. It is a tool of a historian, however beautiful the coins may be as works of art. Their value in teaching civil virtues is all but gone. For the purposes of a modern numismatist, therefore, pieces by Cavino are merely a nuisance to be avoided like the worst numismatic sin, and be weeded out of a collection. The student of economic and political history that is the serious numismatist of today, has no need for the look-alike, confusing pseudo-coins.

But this should not be the concern of a medal collector. His is a hobby rooted both in the love of history – medals were ever used to commemorate important events in the life of a nation, and in the love of art – for many medals are just

beautiful objects. Medals are of no interest to an historian of economy: while medals may resemble the coins in material, method of production and issuing authority, unlike coins they are not the life-blood of economic activity.

Yet, just like coins, desirable medals can be very rare. And just like the coins, the medals can be replicated. Before the middle of 19th century, the prime mode of replication was casting. A mold was made from a specimen on hand, and metal poured into it. The resulting cast was not as sharp, not as good. Not only was it a second-generation piece physically; much worse, it was a second-quality piece aesthetically.

But scientific progress did not stay still. In the early 19th century, a new, previously unknown fundamental force of nature was discovered, studied and put to use: electricity. It produced profound changes in every sphere of life: reliable streetlight; faster transportation; better machinery. Even the out-of-the-way, quiet, bookish pursuit of a collector was affected.

It happened because one industrial application of electricity brought with it a means of exactly replicating the treasured numismatic rarities: electrotyping. The older processes used either the force of gravity, or the property called plasticity, to form a medal. When a medal was cast, force of gravity pulled the molten metal into the cavities of the mold. The technique of striking utilizes plasticity – the ability of metal to change its form under the pressure rather than break. Electrotyping used an entirely different

principle to force the metal into taking the shape of a mold.

When the salt of a metal is dissolved in a liquid, it breaks into ions, or charged particles. Ions of metals are positive, because they lack their electrons. Introduce an electric current into this dissolved salt – and the positive ions of metal will drift to the negative electrode, called cathode. Moreover, they will gain from it their missing electrons, thus metamorphosing from ions into regular atoms – and will become stuck on the cathode. Make your cathode of some soft substance that conducts electricity, and give it a fancy shape, say by impressing one side of a medal into it – and the accumulated metal will take exactly the shape you want.

“Exactly” is the key word here. After-casting produces a smaller medal because the metal shrinks as it cools, and a less sharp one because of the surface tension of liquid metal. Not so with electrotyping. Your electrotype will be as good as the impression that the original medal has made in the mold. Yet, for all the beauty of his work, electrotypist can claim no fame for his skills, which should consist merely of not deforming the mold. This is why you will find no list of electrotypists here, and no praise will be given to one individual over another. In fact, there is no total consistency in any individual’s output. Even such a famous (or infamous, if you will) electro typist as Charles Ready could, when in a haste, bungle a job. Look at a photo of his electrotype of the rare, struck British Museum example of Thomas Simon’s beautiful Lord Protector medal in Henfrey’s classical Numismata Cromvellianna. The lettering of

Cromwell’s title apparently did not make a sharp impression in the mold, and was crudely corrected. And looking at this electrotype itself, I think that the forehead isn’t properly defined either. Some material from the mold must have stuck to this area of the original medal as it was being pulled out of the mold. This said, I have no complaints of the quality of his electrotypes of the medals of pope Julius II.

The major industry to capitalize on this fine quality of reproduction afforded by electrotyping was printing, and the best testimony as to the exceptional fidelity of an electrotype to the original comes from the printers. With literacy rapidly growing, a demand for illustrated periodicals and books was also on the rise. Readers expected their magazines to be profusely illustrated with wood engravings; major Victorian artists were employed for magazine illustration. But it took time to engrave a wood block, and blocks were brittle things, easily damaged by the steam press. Damage to just one block could spell disaster for a printer who needed to deliver a hundred thousand copies of a magazine by the first of the month. This is where electrotyping came to the rescue. Engraved blocks were electrotyped, to make their exact replicas in metal, that were much more durable, and could be easily replaced when damaged. And quality did not need to be sacrificed. The finest lines were picked up by the process, not a single tiniest detail was lost. In some cases, impressions taken from the electrotypes by skilled specialists are greatly superior to those taken from the original blocks by the artist or his printer. Such is the case

of William Blake's evocative pastoral woodcuts illustrating Virgil. The impressions from electrotypes of the original blocks carefully taken in the 1930's are vastly superior to the illustrations as they appeared in the (now very expensive) book published a century prior, even though the original blocks were employed in it. In another testament to high quality of electrotypes, when the leader of English arts-and-crafts movement William Morris decided to turn to book printing and organized his private, Kelmscott press to run on the idealized, primitive technology of the 15th century print shop, utilizing hand-made paper, hand press, and woodcut illustration, his partner – an experienced, professional printer Emery Walker suggested that they use electrotypes of their fancily cut initial letters. Morris was struck to the core by such sacrilege, but Walker persisted. A practical man, he had an electrotpe of one letter made, and took impressions from both the original and the electrotpe side by side on one sheet of paper – and with sly innocence asked Morris to tell which was printed from wood, and which from the metal. The man of exquisite taste did not even try, but meekly acquiesced to Walker's suggestion, thus bringing the 19th century technology into his 15th century works.

The precision of electrotyping technique thus established, what follows? I think the major lesson for a medal collector is, that were we as rational today as were the collectors of the 19th century, we would have welcomed the production of electrotypes of the rare medals, just as they did. A

couple of years ago, when I first got introduced to the hobby, I had a bit of correspondence with the National Gallery in Washington, suggesting to them that they make electrotypes of the wonderful Pisanello's and De Pasti's and other pieces in the Kress collection, and sell them in their gift shop – a suggestion that was found abhorrent. It still puzzles me that the institution whose stated goal is to develop our taste for art, and which is perfectly able to share with us some of the finest works of medallic art in their purest and primary form – the form of the original itself, so as to allow us to enjoy them, in their electrotpe form, the way they are ought to be enjoyed, by being held in the hand and closely examined in the comfort of one's home – would rather choose to lock its cabinets and allow us only a cold and perfunctory glance.

This brings us back to the distinction between a "name" and a "fact" that Giorgio Vasari had made some four and a half centuries ago, and that is still relevant today. The "name" – the despised and feared name "electrotpe" – hides behind it a beautiful "fact" – that in all that should matter to a one who collects medals for their aesthetic value, for their beauty, the electrotypes are as adequate as the originals themselves. Being of the identical shape as the originals, they, in effect, are the originals; they are Michelangelo's posing for the antiques. Yes, it is true that they are not antiques; but having a mere Michelangelo is, perhaps, not so bad either.

Now, I do not suggest that for the other aspects of the hobby, the "name" of

the electrotypes should be entirely disregarded. When pricing and purchasing them, electrotypes should obviously command a far lower price, and no deceit of the collector in that matter is to be tolerated. The “serious” collector, a collector of the fiber of cardinal San Giorgio, will have to develop some serious connoisseurship, in order not to be defrauded. But a collector like myself is happy with the “fact,” the fact that in having an electrotype, he has all that is desired in a fine medal. He has in his hands the original in the most relevant sense of the word.

Books for Sale

- 1) Wyoming Historical and Geological Society. Vol. II, Part 2, 1886. This is the issue that contains the Reverend H.E. Hayden’s article on Indian Peace medals. Still useful today. Front cover chipped but contents uncut. \$125.
- 2) Lossing, B.J. Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution. New York, 1850. Two volumes. Cloth bound with ribbed extremities but gold-stamped lettering/devices well preserved. Illustrations and historical details of all medals coming out of this war. A standard reference. \$150.

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